

Snowshed

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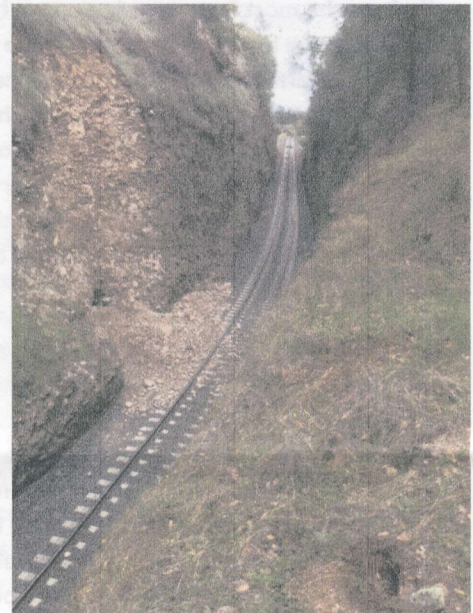
Bloomer Cut Slide

Bob Bell

I visited the Bloomer Cut in Auburn in mid March on my way home from Sacramento and took this photo of landslide remains that occurred in the cut recently. This may have been the slide that caused both the east bound and west bound Amtrak to be stopped in both directions during the storm the prior week.

The other northern track, the one that goes over the freeway in Auburn, was probably closed during this slide due to replacement of the wood ties with concrete ties that has been occurring throughout the Auburn area. The Bloomer Cut, I believe, is primarily a west bound track, but while I was there, Amtrak passed thru the cut in the East bound direction probably because the tie replacement work train was sitting on top of the Hwy 80 bridge. Lots of concrete tie consists and tie installing equipment have been active in the Auburn area for the past several weeks and are often visible from the freeway.

I cannot believe the RR has never gunited the walls of this cut given that the stones can be easily pulled out when the clay cementing the stones together is wet, but leaving the walls in their natural state is great for historical preservation. On second thought, these walls have stood for about 147 years so perhaps guniting the walls would not be



Remnants of The Bloomer Cut Slide

much better.

The Bloomer Cut was completed in 1864 and at the time was considered one of the eight wonders of the world. The trough was up to sixty feet deep and extended for over eight hundred feet. It was dug using hundreds of laborers and consumed up to five hundred kegs of black powder a day to dig through the cement-hard gravel that comprises the Bloomer Divide. All the excavated material was removed using wheelbarrows and one-horse carts.

If you have not seen the cut it is a great side trip that only takes a few minutes from I 80 in Auburn.



News Flash!

- ◆ Society to Develop Phase 2 Museum
- ◆ Railyard development moves ahead
- ◆ Interim Museum Hits Attendance High
- ◆ The Bloomer Cut Still Going Strong

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Interim Museum Happenings

Don Davis

With the extraordinary work of a few dedicated member-docents, this month the museum surpassed the eleven thousand visitor mark, truly amazing. But these few cannot do it alone. We need more volunteers. Please contact me (ddavis@ltol.com) if you would like to learn what is involved and volunteer some time.

Perhaps the most important lesson we have learned as we look toward our ultimate goal of a significant permanent museum is that the museum visitor is changing. Yes, there are still those who wish to browse through static exhibits of artifacts and reminisce nostalgically. The younger generation however, having been brought up with the Internet and smart phone, increasingly wants to be engaged

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and entertained while learning. To be successful in the future, museums must have displays that interact with the visitor and immersive displays that stimulate their senses.

What do we mean by interactive and immersive displays? Consider a display about the construction of the transcontinental railroad and its impact. There are social aspects, technical and engineering aspects, political and economic aspects etc. To adequately tell the complete story, the display would be huge and perhaps overwhelming. With an interactive display, the visitor can control what he sees enabling him to focus on the areas that interest him and skim over the rest. An immersive display surrounds the visitor with sensual stimulation. For example a display about the snow bound City of San Francisco might simulate the darkened interior of a railcar with sounds of a blizzard outside, mannequins wrapped in curtains for warmth and have cold air blowing through conveying the feeling of being there.

Presidents Report

Jim Hood

I am truly proud of what the Tahoe Donner Railroad Society has accomplished since its inception. We have proven that we can build and operate a Railroad Museum that has attracted far more visitors than we ever visualized. The year 2012 will be very critical for the organization since we will initiate the conceptualization of the architecture and exhibit philosophy of our permanent museum. The construction of the permanent museum will take many years and be accomplished in several phases, but the overall concept will be formulated this year.

We continue to work with Rick Holliday, the developer of the Railyard project in downtown Truckee, and are rapidly evolving a definitive plan for the next phase of the Railroad Museum and for the permanent museum. We are currently discussing a space of approximately 2000 square feet in the first phase of the Railyard project which Rick Holliday plans to start in 2013 with a 15 to 18 month completion schedule. Over the next few months, we will be working with an architect to define general requirements for the next phase of the museum and to develop a concept for the permanent museum. Further we will begin working with an exhibit designer to formulate the type of displays that will provide a "modern/interactive" environment for people visiting the new museum. We will also identify the cost to build this next phase of the museum and formulate a capital fundraising program.

This is a very exciting time for the Tahoe Donner Railroad Society. These new museum projects are exactly what the TDRS was chartered to accomplish from its inception. We will soon be able to provide a visualization of the next phase of the museum expansion and to present an architectural concept of the permanent museum. The majority of the planning work for the permanent museum has been done by a subset of the members of the Board of Directors. We really need help from all of the TDRS members to assist in the planning and execution of the tasks ahead of us. Please volunteer your support by emailing me at jim.hood7914@att.net

Major Upgrade of Rotaries by Union Pacific

Jerry Blackwill

The society's rotary is about to become even more of a historic artifact. Union Pacific is rebuilding its rotaries in a way that will make the snow removal machines look quite different. The change was prompted by last winter's heavy snows. Over 58 feet of snow fell on Donner Pass making it one of the tenth snowiest winters since 1879.

The first line of defense when snow covers the rails are the yellow, caboose-like flangers. A flanger is so named because a "flange" drops down between the tracks to clear snow from between the rails. When it begins to snow, these short trains run as high as thirty five miles per hour between Truckee and Blue Canyon clearing the rails of snow. The first sign of trouble last winter was when a flanger was derailed by a heavy accumulation of snow.

The second line of defense are spreaders which have large "wings" on the side of the units that spread the snow out from the rails. The blades normally keep the snow clear for some distance from the tracks. Most winters this is all that's required as the flangers and spreaders can keep the line sufficiently clear to provide for continued railroad operation.

Last winter, spreaders were running twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. They were pushing snow as high as the cab of the spreader and still appeared to be losing the battle. When a flanger was caught in an avalanche west of Cisco, the Union Pacific had no choice but to bring the rotaries out. Even then, it took over a day to open the Union Pacific's line over the Sierra. The rotaries hadn't been used in over ten years as snow levels during that period were such that the flanger/spreader combination was sufficient to keep the tracks clear.

After experiencing the heavy snows of 2010/2011, Union Pacific decided it was time to upgrade the three Roseville rotaries. They are being sent back to the Relco locomotive rebuilding facility in Albia, Iowa. This will be the first major upgrade in over 60 years. The entire top section of the rotary will be replaced. New diesel engines and steam generators will be installed. The engineer's visibility will be improved by placing his position in the center of the cab. The center window is clearest because the rotary blows snow to either side. Lastly, the latest electronics will be added to allow the rotary to be controlled at very low speeds.

Because new parts have not been available, rotary SPMW 207 became the source of spare parts for the other two rotaries. It will be the first of the three rotaries to be upgraded. Recently, large cranes in the Roseville yards lowered SPMW 207 on a special low center flat car for rail transport back to the Iowa rebuilding facility.

Thanks to Brendan Compton of BA Productions for his comments describing the rotary upgrades and railroad operations in the winter of 2010 - 2011.



TDRS Rotary



Flanger



Spreader

Truckee Donner Railroad Society

Society Mission:

To preserve, interpret, and educate the public about rail-roading life and history in the Truckee region including its contribution to Truckee and the Nation. Specifically, depict railroad involvement in local industry through the acquisition, preservation, and restoration of relevant equipment, documents, and artifacts all to be part of a permanent museum facility in downtown Truckee.

Board of Directors:

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501(c) 3 non-profit organization

Truckee Railroad museum Vision:

Keeping Truckee railroads alive!

Railroads of the Truckee area played a significant role in founding and developing the town of Truckee.

From the blasting of black powder in the granite over Donner Lake, to the hissing of the first steam coming in to town, to whistles of lumberjacks in the mountains, to the crack of ice being loaded in the reefers, and tourists flocking to share the beauty of the area, the Truckee Railroad Museum tells the story.

- ◆ A place to Discover
- ◆ A place to Enjoy
- ◆ A place to Interact

Current Projects Seeking Support

- ◆ Caboose Museum Interior
- ◆ Crane Rehabilitation
- ◆ Rotary Restoration
- ◆ Sleeper Restoration
- ◆ Switcher Operational repair
- ◆ Internet Book Sales

If you are able to support any of these projects with your time, talent or dollars, please contact us.

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